

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 15, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our support for the permanent protection of the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area and its designation as the first National Marine Monument in the U.S. Atlantic.

The New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area is a very special and extremely vulnerable area. It is composed of five submarine canyons (Oceanographer, Gilbert, Lydonia, Nygren and Heezen) off the southern New England coast and the four nearby undersea mountains—the only such seamounts in the U.S. Atlantic Ocean. This suite of underwater features is home to ancient coral gardens and other diverse and fragile habitats. The dynamic ocean environment of the canyons and seamounts attracts an array of ocean wildlife, including whales, sea turtles, fish and seabirds. A number of these species are iconic for the region, such as sperm whales and North Atlantic right whales, and are among those that support New England's vibrant whale watching, recreational fishing, and seabird viewing industries.

Currently a virtually pristine deep ocean wilderness, the continued health of this area is important to New England, where our ocean resources support over 230,000 jobs and \$16 billion in economic activity. Over half of these jobs are in the tourism and recreation sector, which depends on clean ocean water and healthy and abundant fish and wildlife, such as those that live or rely on the canyons and seamounts area. As the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration reported earlier this summer, the ocean economy's contribution to gross domestic product grew by 10.5 percent in 2012—more than four times as fast as the U.S. economy as a whole. Employment in the ocean economy increased 3.8 percent, twice the national average employment growth of 1.8 percent.

The area also offers substantial benefits to the State of Connecticut. The seamounts and canyons have been important study sites for University of Connecticut and Mystic Aquarium researchers, with collected data continuing to provide advances in scientific knowledge and understanding. The Peabody Museum at Yale has been the repository for species documented on the seamounts and in the canyons, contributing to the diversity of the collection in New Haven.

The biomedical and biotechnological fields within academic institutions across the state enjoy a wealth of future research opportunities from the area. The Mystic Aquarium is the region's largest science and natural history attraction outside the Boston area and the state's largest informal science education provider. The Aquarium intends to build up educational and interpretive materials, which it and the University of Connecticut helped to initially develop, about the canyons and seamounts for K-12 use in Connecticut schools. Both the Mystic Aquarium and the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium consider the area to be an exciting ambassador of the deep-sea to the general public.

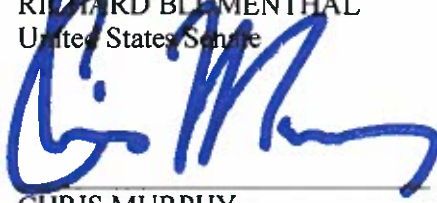
Finally, the abundance of fish, whales, dolphins and other marine creatures found in this spectacular undersea landscape are important for Connecticut's ocean recreation and tourism industries. Permanent protection of the New England canyons and seamounts will preserve them as thriving seascapes and living marine laboratories. Permanent protection is supported by over 130 prominent marine scientists along with hundreds of aquaria, environmentally concerned business leaders, conservation organizations, whale watching and other businesses, faith based groups, and others whose interests and livelihoods depend on a healthy ocean.

Long-term protection for the biologically rich New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area will benefit ocean resources more broadly. Such protection can also build resiliency against the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification. Now is the time to safeguard these deep sea treasures. For these reasons, we support permanent protection of the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area and their designation as a National Marine Monument.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate



CHRIS MURPHY  
United States Senate



ROSA L. DELAURO  
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress



ELIZABETH ESTY  
Member of Congress



JAMES A. HIMES  
Member of Congress



JOHN LARSON  
Member of Congress